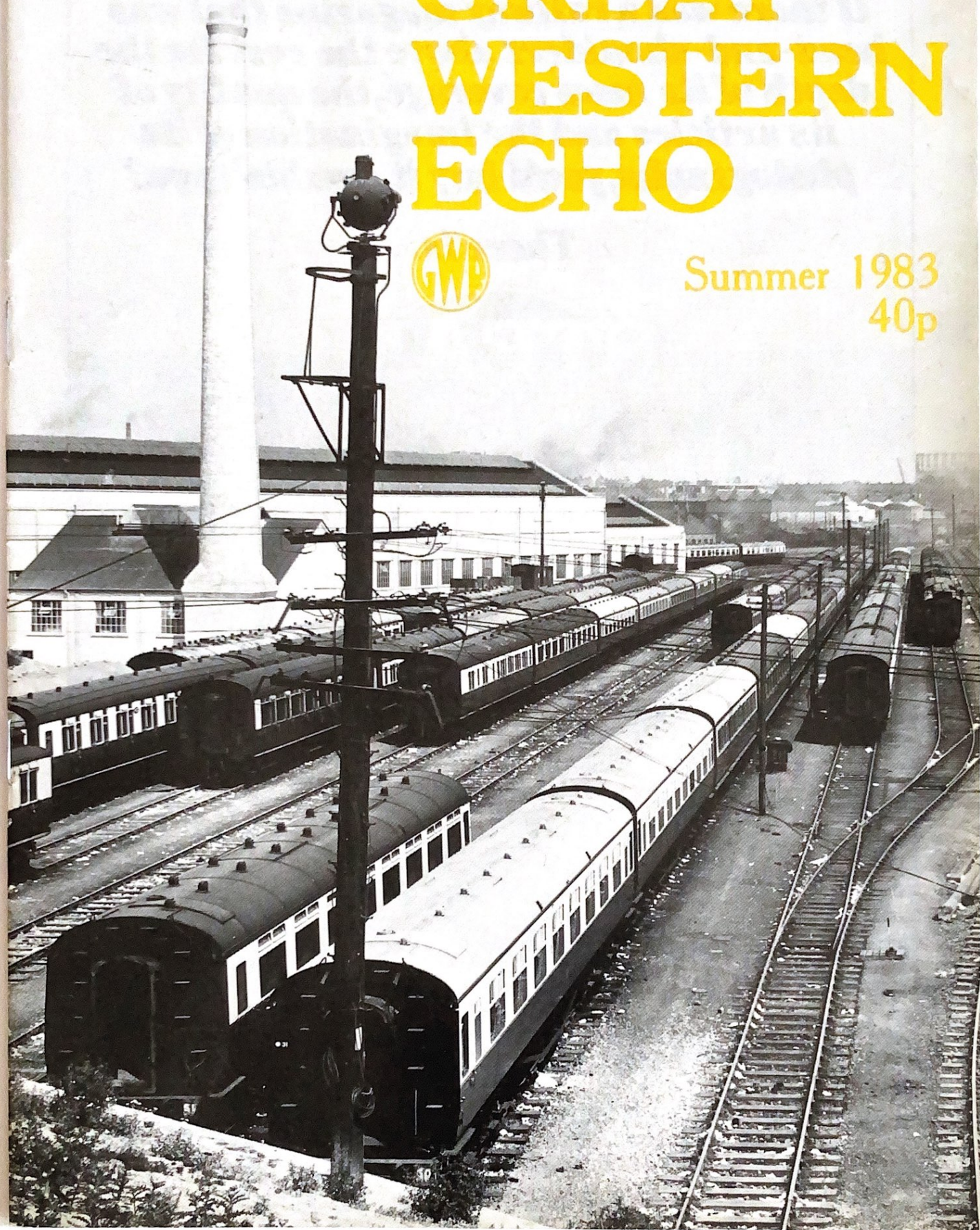


# GREAT WESTERN ECHO



Summer 1983  
40p





***If there was a railway magazine that was head-and-shoulders above the rest for the depth of its news coverage, the quality of its articles and the imagination of its photographs, you'd buy it, wouldn't you?***

***There is.***



***Simply a better magazine  
The leading railway monthly for followers of steam***

## **GREAT WESTERN STEAM on Video!**

**"GREAT WESTERN STEAM Vol One" [60 minutes]**  
(Depicting the British Railways W.R. era).

Compiled from the films of Brian Hollingsworth, Richard Greenwood, Colin Jacks, H.G. Forsythe & Chris Fishbourne with full (dubbed) sound-track. Featuring Kings, Castles, Halls, Granges, Manors, 56XX's, 2884's, Prairies and Panniers. Also seen are a Saint, Star, 47XX, Dukedogs, plus slip coach.

**"GREAT WESTERN STEAM Vol Two" [60 minutes]**  
(Workings of the 'King' class in the 1930's)

Two 16 mm (B&W silent) films made by J.F. Traxler to which we have added loco effects & music. Shown are #6000 on the 'Torbay Express' and #6024 on the 'Cornish Riviera Express'. PLEASE NOTE much footage shot 'on train' or [#6024] on the footplate. This programme is for the hardened enthusiast only.

**"ROUNDABOUT REVISITED Vol One" [60 minutes]**  
(Filmed by Patrick Whitehouse & John Adams)

Not 100% ex-G.W.R. locomotives but does feature 'Bewdley & District in B.R. Days', 'The Last Train to Monmouth[64XX]', 'Castle Finale[#5054 & #7029]- plus ex-L&Y locos, Scottish preserved locos, 'The Restoration of Midland Compound #1000', 'Super D', & 'Early Days at the Birmingham Railway Museum'. N.B. 16 mm B&W- Castle Finale and Tyseley in colour (filmed for the B.B.C. T.V. series).

The retail price of each programme is £29.95 incl. By joining the Stirling Video Club you will enjoy substantial discounts i.e. ALL THREE ABOVE PROGRAMMES for £62.35 (i.e. £20.78 each) including 12 months membership. Send TODAY for full details to:-

Stirling Video, PO Box 76, Reading,  
Berks RG4 0LB.

n.b all rights reserved/callers please phone first.



# Great Western Echo

Journal of the Great Western Society

No. 82

Summer 1983



*This page—No, not the latest post-Serpell Inter-City travel but the Taunton Group on their way to an appearance in the Guinness Book of Records. On Easter Sunday ten members, in shifts of four, covered 100 miles in a record 10 hours, 52 minutes on their restored ganger's pump trolley on a section of the West Somerset Railway not presently used by train services. Funds raised are to be devoted to the Broad Gauge Project at Didcot. (Geoff King)*

*Cover—Old Oak Common Carriage Depot 7th June 1939. A pall of smoke hangs over the locomotive depot behind the buildings on the left. (British Railways)*



# Working for the GWR

## In the CMEs Department <sup>by</sup> Mrs W. Wright

I started work in the office of the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Department of the Great Western Railway at Old Oak Common a year before the General Strike of 1926, and, job opportunity at that time being almost as bad as it is now, I was glad to have the chance. I came, very green to the commercial world straight from a very good girls' boarding school, and had some qualifications but there being no grant aid in those days, and my widowed mother not having the means to pay for my further education, there I was. I think not many young people nowadays would have tolerated work conditions and salaries as were current then. The offices were next to the engine sheds, machine shops, coppersmiths' and repair sheds; the atmosphere was sulphurous and filthy. Office conditions were Dickensian. When I arrived there first, copies of letters written in copying ink were taken on damp tissues in a cumbersome press by a little gnome of a man called Arthur, and subsequently pinned on their appropriate files stored in the mice-infested loft. The staff was, of course, mainly male plus three ladies left over from 1st World War time recruitment; there was, therefore no provision of a ladies' rest room. There was a cubicle at one end of the loft, with a lavatory bowl, a wash bowl (cold water) and a mirror hung above a wooden plank—the latter being the only place to lie on and put up your feet when you felt unwell. The other end of the loft held the soi-disant canteen or messroom, also mice-infested. This was presided over by a lady who would warm up, in the filthy oven, such food as people brought with them. Some of us denied ourselves this pleasure,

and took salads. Some went home to lunch if they lived nearby; some of the men went to a pub to eat sandwiches.

Having written the above, it amazes me to remember that we accepted life at that level—it was a Factory Inspector's nightmare, and a far cry from the life led by the cream of Great Western officials. And yet, strangely, a sort of pride in working for the "Western" dwelt in the ranks of the workers.

There were five sections in the office: correspondence, engine history and maintenance, engine working and time-tables, accounts, and Staff. I spent some time in each of these, and enjoyed most the engine history, and the staff sections.

The idea of joint conferences, i.e. with staff chiefs and the "working" element was beginning, and I was in time to be involved in the General Strike of 1926. I knew nothing really of the significance of the strike or the reasons for it—I'm ashamed to say that my friends and I enjoyed the unwonted liberty and the chance to play tennis and the occasional "strike" meeting, when dedicated workers came in with reports of "100% solid support" from outlying depots. My friends in the office were on strike including—very courageously, as it could have cost him any promotion—the chief of the Staff section. In the event most of those who stayed at work were the incompetents or those who thought it worth while to be on the side of the bosses. Actually, it took us the best part of a year to straighten up the mess they made, when we all went back.

The Chief Clerk of the Department at the time was a hard,

cruel man, clothed in a little authority, who rode roughshod over anyone without the courage to stand up to him. Some of the older men told us tales of how the lives and promotion prospects of anyone not going to the boss's chapel on Sundays were abysmal. I knew of two men who retired from the service on the same grade they started on, and one old chap never took his annual leave because he could envisage no other life than that of going to and from the office each day.

Gradually younger people were recruited and the atmosphere in the office changed—laughter was heard in the corridors, there were merry japes! Chaps chased girls up the spiral staircase to the loft and around the serried ranks of filing cabinets, and, I'm ashamed to say, waited at the foot of the spiral to watch the various shapes and sizes of legs descending. Our own set developed our own "goon" talk, long before the advent of P. Sellers and H. Secombe, much to the bewilderment of the older members of staff. In spite of the lessening of tension we did work, and did it well and more quickly, and we managed to enjoy life despite the discomfort and hardship. Equipment was elementary. We did have typewriters—Olivers—which sounded like tanks or combine harvesters, and were nearly as heavy to work. But at least they had the merit of simplicity. I remember one occasion, the spring of mine having snapped off at the end, I removed it and took it over to the machine shop, where an obliging chap tempered the end and drilled a new hole so that I could fit it on the spindle, and it worked!





*Above and below—inside the carriages at Newbury; the upper one is clearly one of Collett's open excursions thirds, perhaps No. 1289? (W. Wright).*

We had out "occasions"—an office Dinner, probably at the Regent Palace Hotel (J. Lyons) or an outing perhaps to the West Country or the Isle of Wight, when a whole coach was booked, with breakfast on the train, a good lunch where ever we landed, perhaps a coach ride and dinner on the train coming home. On these trips, the sheep were sharply divided from the goats, those who sought the company of the bosses not mixing with the riff-raff—us. There were of course, office romances, several of which, including that of my late husband and myself, blossomed into permanent relationships. It was almost impossible, obviously to keep these affairs secret, although we always fondly hoped that we wouldn't run into someone from the office on an evening trip to the theatre or cinema in the West End. Access to town was easy from Old Oak Common (Willesden Junction) catching an "Elephant" to Piccadilly on a 3d. return "zone" ticket. We joined a theatre club which gave us the chance of two seats for the price of one at a wide choice of theatres. We roamed the city in the evening hours when all was quiet in Threadneedle Street, we walked by the Thames Embankment or St. Catherine's Dock, or visited the free exhibitions and museums, and the News Theatres.

One of the few advantages of working at Old Oak Common was access across the Carriage Works Sidings to watch the Royal Train carrying Kings, Queens, Princesses

and visiting Royalty on their way out from Paddington to Windsor or other of their stamping grounds. Having left the splendour of red carpeted platforms, stationmasters in top hats et al. they may have wondered who the peasants were gawping at them as they glided by. Discounting the primitive conditions, there really was a joy in seeing the giants—the Kings, the Castles, and even the "tankies" steam out from the shed; all that lovely shining metal (and it did shine then) running smoothly along the rails toward Westbourne Park and Paddington.



In due course World War II was upon us. The Engine-Working Section had been busy for some time past on the secret arrangements for evacuation—all very hush-hush and with the silent hope that these would never have to be put into operation. By the time war was actually declared I had married and therefore, by company's regulations, had resigned from the service.

We had one week in our bungalow before the sirens started, and eventually the C.M.E.'s Department was moved to Newbury, and worked in coaches on the sidings of the Race Course. A few months later I was asked to return for temporary service with the accounts section there. It was November and very cold. The coaches were steam heated; it was bitter when we arrived there in the morning but by mid-day it was impossible to see out of the windows for fog. We had to start from home near Watford before 7.00 a.m. each morning to catch the staff train from Paddington to Newbury; we never saw daylight at home during the week as the staff train left Newbury for Paddington about 4.00 p.m. and arrival time was anyone's guess. If anything more important (and that was almost everything) came along we were shunted into a siding until the line was clear again, so that we were lucky to get back to Watford by 8.30 p.m. A red letter day was when there was a race meeting at Newbury and a "Special" return to





*The pioneer Hall No. 4900 Saint Martin passing Reading West with a stopping train for Newbury in the 1930s. One wonders if the presence of the photographer in the bottom right, the light load of a single B set and the obviously well-turned out engine heralded a special occasion. (British Railways)*

Paddington was laid on—of which we took advantage. Fortunately I had a loving mother with a flat in Harrow—she stayed in our home during the week and had an evening meal and a good fire waiting for us. The staff train was unlighted of course, and the tedium of the journey was enlivened by some rough and tumble horse-play in the darkened carriages. One lady used to bring her knitting, and a favourite ploy was to snip off the wool and leave her with a short

end. Not unnaturally, I tired of this existence and after a few months I did leave Newbury, and took employment nearer home. I was enrolled at the Air Raid Headquarters (the local farm) as a Warden for duty when sirens went during the day. Bernard was shortly asked to move to Paddington to work as Controller on the Control Board for locomotive power, and also did fire-watching on the roof at Paddington—a daunting experience.

I am still a railwayman at heart, but don't like the diesels. I love to see pictures on television of well-oiled rods sliding back and forth with precision, the embodiment of sheer power. The nearest I get to it now is a visit to Swanage Shed. The Wareham to Swanage Line sadly no longer functions, but some enthusiasts there do have a stretch of line on which they actually get a steam loco. running, and it possible to remember the lovely country run it used to be.



# 2~ A Lad at Kingsland Road

by  
**R.M. Parsons**

I was appointed as a replacement for one of the three lads who shared the 24 hour shifts at Kingsland Road Sidings, a mile east of Temple Meads, in May 1934, and stayed there until at the age of 20 (under the then rule) it was necessary for me to move on. Although I did not long remain an employee of the G.W.R. my memory of those days is still clear and it is interesting to look back to life in pre-nationalisation days. Our job was to man the telephones and do all the odd jobs around the 'office' which was part of the shunters' cabin. When the foreman and a couple of shunters came in, the 'office' was full. There was a long desk built into the wall beneath the window, five wall-telephones, gas lighting, a few hooks on the wall, a round coal stove in the corner with a huge black kettle which had to be kept full and near-boiling, and a couple of high stools.

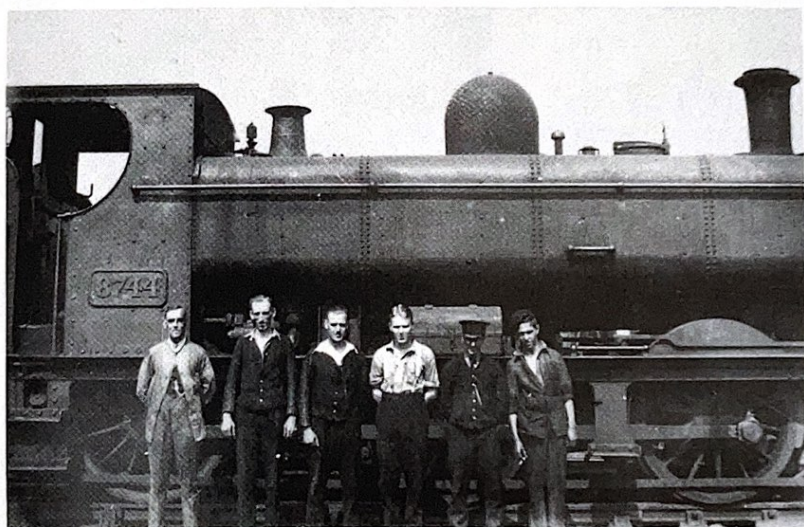
I often pass this cabin today, and it looks quite unchanged, as does the yard itself except for the tall floodlights which appeared in the 1950s. One difference however is that the yard now seems to be quiet, with almost no night activity, whereas in my time it was very busy indeed—serving as it did the biggest goods shed in the world at Temple Meads. Like the other yards in the Bristol area it was an interchange point for the various transfer trains that linked them all, and it received a few goods trains which ended their journeys there. It also had its own small road-rail transfer yard with an old hand-crane which I never saw in use. But it had one special function. It stored empty wagons for Temple Meads, and these went across in rafts of up to sixty, often by night. I am sure it still does this.

Each shift consisted of a foreman, three shunters and a lad, all except the lad in their sleeve-waistcoat uniform. A pannier tank pilot engine was on constant duty, engines changed over at 6 a.m.

daily—relieving those two crews of the job of walking round from the Marsh Shed. The day shift shunters took their meal break as traffic permitted (I wonder if the N.U.R., to which we all belonged, had any say in such matters at that time?) Things were a little quieter on the night shift and extra breaks were taken, a mug of scalding tea being a life-saver on many a winter's night. Despite crowding the 'office' was the normal place of assembly between shunts, so I was never short of company. Visiting guards and loco men also came in for a warm up, or to fill their cans with boiling water. Apart from the telephone duty my other main job was to fill in the movement book which recorded arrivals and departures with the number of wagons attached. On each page was a column headed Remarks and Weather, and being a little bored one night I decided that the boffins at Paddington had intended this column to be used, so I entered some harmless comments such as 'storm at 3 a.m.' and 'nothing to report', but when I came on duty for the next shift I found that

shunters had gone to town on this column. Real railway wit no doubt, things like 'lightning over Marsh Shed' and 'cows at large in Ashton Meadows' (one of the carriage sidings). I did not tempt fate again.

These men were always full of good humour and were very kind and helpful to me, straight from school, a little insecure at finding myself among apparently rough men whose language included a few words my English teachers had never mentioned. Only my own shift foreman remained a little hostile to me, resentful perhaps that I had been at school after 14, and he liked to taunt me about my future prospects on the railway. He came from the Wantage area, where he may have begun life on a farm, his favourite oath being 'God speed the plough'. One of the phones seemed to be redundant, but the foreman would not have this, and seizing the earpiece one day he bellowed into it for some minutes, furiously jiggling the stirrup, after which he flung it down and muttering something about 'obley' oys disappeared outside. Another phone had a



*Kingsland Road 1936, shunters, telephone boy (not author) and pilotmen (R. M. Parsons)*





*Kingsland Road 1936 taken from the main line signal post; the shunters cabin is in the left foreground. (R. M. Parsons)*

direct link to the High Level goods signal box at Temple Meads, around which hovered the presence of the duty Inspector over there, of whom all at Kingsland Road stood in awe. Occasionally I heard the high-pitched rant of that God-like figure, fortified probably by a pint or two before duty, and always hoped to pass the phone to the nearest shunter.

Goods trains from South Wales sometimes stopped at North Somerset Junction, pegged down the brakes of the wagons, and the train engine would then back down a few Bristol wagons into our yard. My job was then to phone North Somerset Box and release the train engine which would take the train to East Depot a mile or two further up the main line. Kingsland Road handled two express goods trains daily, one from Banbury which

arrived mid-morning, and one from London which arrived about 2 a.m. Both were routed via Reading and the Newbury line, and being partly loose-coupled in those days were signalled as they approached the west country so that they would not foul up the main line on re-joining it at Bath. For each of them I received a call from North Somerset Box, and I then had to go out into the yard, find the foreman and call out 'Bill, Banbury at Freshford'. The foreman would then draw himself up to his full height (about 5ft. 4ins.), gather himself together and bawl 'LET 'IM RUN'. An hour later the board would go off, the Hall would put her snout over the Feeder Canal bridge, and there would be old Bill, waving her in, the proudest man in all Bristol.

And that was how they saw it. God's Wonderful Railway. Not one

of them had four pounds a week. A house to pay for, children to feed, perhaps a battered old bike to bring them from St. Annes or Bedminster, a bit of garden or a greyhound or a few pigeons, and the railway came first. Sometimes a Midland loco or an R.O.D. would sidle down the main, and then the wit would flow. One thing, though, to watch for—if an inspection coach was sighted there came the call "Directors' coach!"—caps were straightened, point levers thrown . . . all was well.

Down in the depths of the Tar Road where tank wagons were discharged by pipeline direct to barges on the canal, I found a battered old two-stroke motorbike, which I brought up to the cabin one summer day and tried to start. It would have none of it. Neither on paraffin nor petrol. The lads watched as they slung their couplings and the pilot thundered up and down the roads. When the shunt was over one day, the pilot came quietly down to the cabin, and—just as I went to kick start the bike—somebody put a detonator on the line, and for a moment I thought she had started. Then I had to go and sit down for a bit, it was the first time I'd heard one so near.

On a summer Bank Holiday the foreman would give the signal and the whole staff would troop across the footbridge to the Perseverance pub for a quiet pint (2½p) in the company's time. Then I would be up on the footplate of the pilot



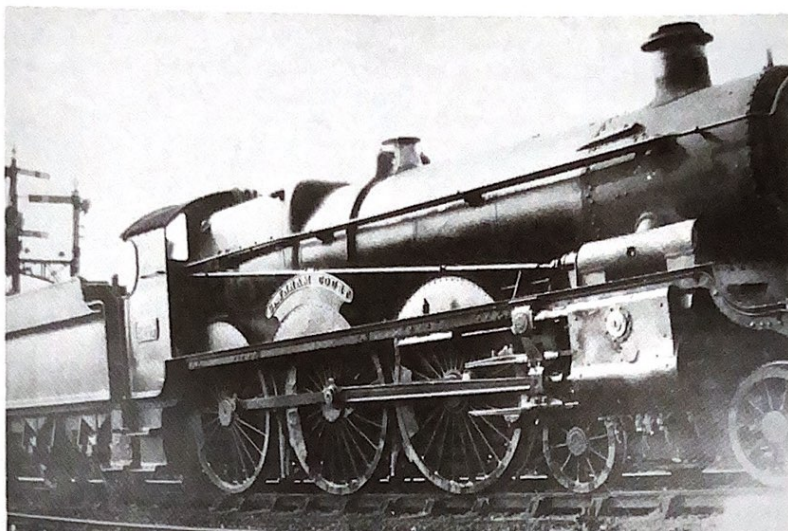
*Churchward 2-8-0 No. 2846 climbing out of the Severn Tunnel with a Bristol bound coal train c. 1936 (G. H. Soole/National Railway Museum).*



engine for a chat with the loco men. One day I was lucky and the driver took off the handbrake and let me run her gently up and down outside the cabin, well screened from public road and main line. I was like any other lad. Nobody wanted to be a George Best or a Stirling Moss in those days—you wanted to be an engine driver. If that wasn't luck enough, I had a friend whose father was in the number one link L.M.S. at Barrow Road, testing the new Jubilees on the Derby run. I found myself at Temple Meads to meet him off the Derby, on the footplate, well screened against the boiler back plate while we backed the train past East Box up to the carriage sidings. I had been allowed to lift the regulator, and although that was to be the only express engine I ever set in motion, it made no difference to me . . . Swindon for ever.

The most used phone was the one to North Somerset Box, for all our trains came in from the east, and most of them dropped their locos which I had to release to Marsh Shed around the loop at North Somerset. For me however the most important phone stood on its own away from the others, and was a direct link with the Traffic Controllers at Temple Meads. Every couple of hours it was my job to report to the controller the times of all movements at Kingsland Road. I doubt if these were recorded in detail by the controller, except perhaps when fog or line maintenance had upset timings, and it was almost unheard of for a controller to request information of that nature. None the less when I heard the laconic voice at the other end of the line I liked to think that I was assisting him to clear the way for the express passenger trains converging upon the city from east and south.

Most of the locos entering the yard were panniers with the occasional Dean goods, while heavier trains were hauled by Aberdares, 28's, and sometimes a Hall. On one occasion a Star 4 cylinder at the end of her days brought in the Banbury, and on another the poppet-valve Caynham Court—I could not make her out at all, and still have the snap I took of her standing on No. 1 road outside. By that time my interest in locos had grown to a kind of passion, and as time passed I managed to find the drivers who would allow me to do a bit of shunting under

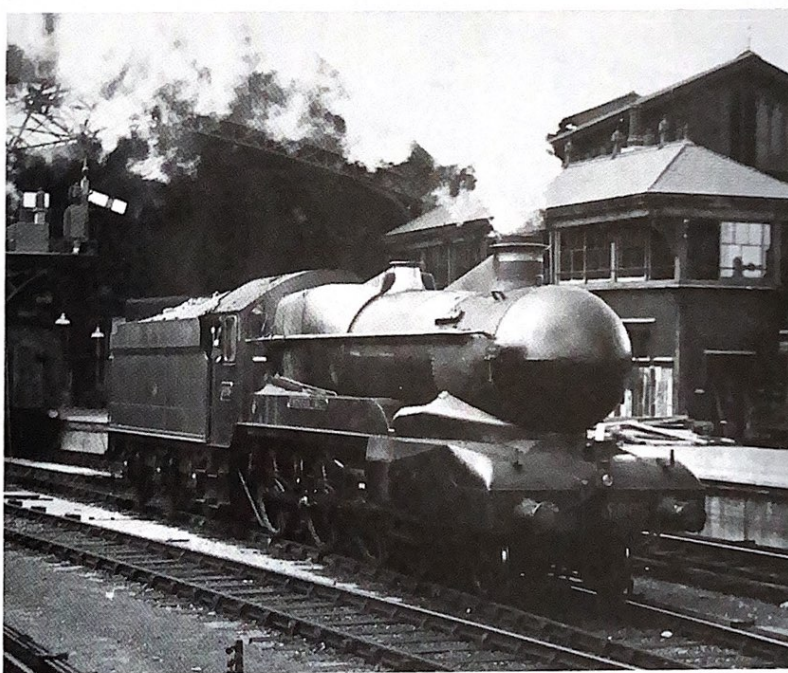


*No. 2936 Caynham Court at Kingsland Road (R. M. Parsons).*

their supervision—with short rafts; never of course with forty wagons because braking such a weight called for a great deal of skill, if one was not to ram the buffer stop or break a coupling when rolling them down the roads. Those men had all put their jobs at risk in allowing me to drive, but probably more worried were the shunters down below—'steady, me son', 'Gawd, what y'sposed to be doing?', 'i c'n hear the Inspector's phone ringing, me son.' After a while the foreman latched on to it, and that was the end of that.

One old pilot, an open cab pannier which could not have been shopped for ten years and whose side rods clanked like worn out church bells, bore the proud sign scrawled into her grease and coal dust STREAMEDLINED. It was the time of the streamlined Castle and King. The graffiti had been done at the Marsh. The lads at Kingsland Road, when they had time to stand their shunting poles against the parapet of the road bridge and take a breather, were more interested in the lassies who passed twice daily on their way to

*No. 5005 Manorbie Castle at Bristol Temple Meads, 1936 (G. H. Soole/National Railway Museum).*





Wills' tobacco factory. Then fags were lighted and they speculated wistfully upon the delights other men might have been enjoying.

The yard had eight roads on the outside section, and eight inside—the latter were used for storage of loaded wagons, special wagons such as crocodiles and for 'cripples', and it was into these that most of the short rafts were propelled. Two of the outside roads were running roads leading west towards Temple Meads, and on the other roads rafts of empties and sorted wagons were built up ready for the arrival of the transfer trains. No. 9 Transfer ran around the Bristol avoiding line from West Depot and into Kingsland Road via North Somerset junction, arriving about three times daily to pick up for the Goods Shed. I got to know all the guards and loco men on this transfer, each had the latest bit of railway gossip and many of them being

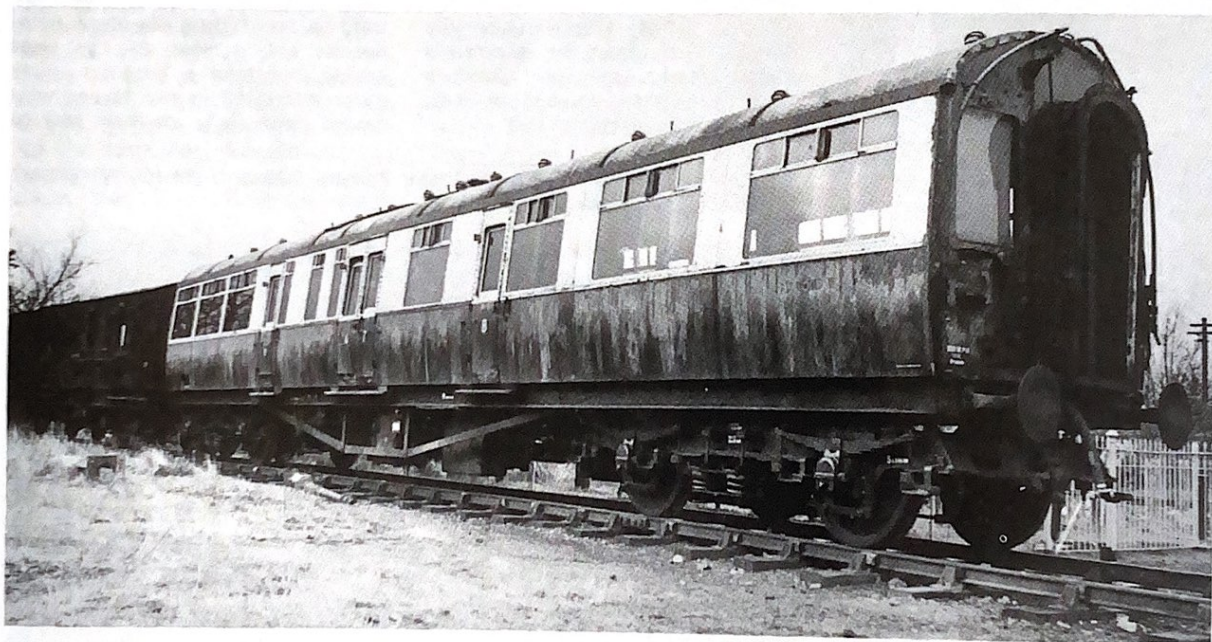
immigrants to Bristol from South Wales, Devon or Wiltshire, there was no lack of variety and humour in the telling.

One job I did not like was to go across to Redcliffe Wharf once a month to get five gallons of paraffin for the shunters' lamps, picking this up in a store right in the shadow of the great church. To do this one earlier put the can into the brake van of No. 9 Transfer, walked across the jungle of lines outside East Box, right through the High Level yard, across the bridge in Victoria Street, and finally put the filled can into another brakevan. I did not mind going across to the vaults beneath Brunel's old station to obtain supplies of stationery, but it was only twenty years later that I realised I had been walking through railway history.

As I write many other memories come back to me. Yet the job I

took up a few years later had nothing to do with railways, and it was not until Dr. Beeching came along that my interest was revived—really it was fear. Would I never again hear a Castle whistle in St. Anne's tunnel and go thundering across Brunel's viaduct by the River Avon? I began to make up for lost time, visiting many of the GW engine sheds between Birmingham, Swindon, Cardiff and Exeter, and taking some 1,000 photographs of various locomotives. I became a comparatively early member of the Great Western Society and a very early one of the Dart Valley Railway. May I in closing take off my hat to the many members at Didcot and to my colleagues at Bristol who have done so much more than I have to build up our Supreme Society?

## FIRST CLASS SALOON NO. 9005 by P. Q. Treloar



The recent re-appearance at Didcot of Coach No. 9005 after a long absence has aroused interest in the vehicle and prompted this account of its history.

In 1930 the GWR produced two identical First Class Saloons intended for party hire. Nos. 9004 and 9005 were built to Diagram

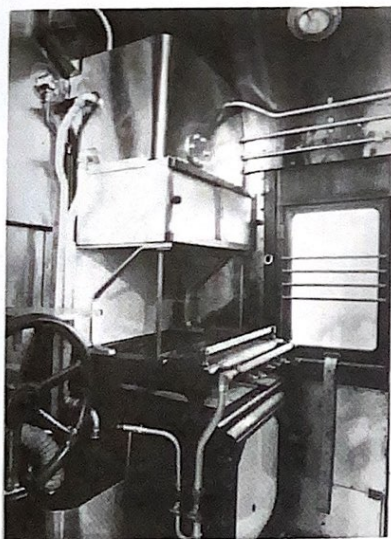
0.59 under lot no. 1431, ordered 29th May 1929 and completed 7th June 1930. They were constructed to the same outline as the 1929 Cornish Riviera stock, although slightly narrower. The length was 61' 4" over the bow ends which were a feature of Collett's coaches from 1925 to 1933, the width at the

noticeably bulging waist 9' 0" and weight in original condition 33 tons 17 cwt. In the centre of the vehicles were a kitchen, pantry and lavatory. One of the double kitchen doors was marked "Guard" but the only provision for a guard seems to have been a brake and a seat in the kitchen. At both ends were saloons



with large side windows and observation windows in the bow ends each side of the central gangway connection. This unusual feature caused one visitor to Didcot to ask why there was an electric driving coach on site. The saloons were panelled with walnut veneer and the seating was upholstered with moquette boldly patterned on a beige ground. The larger saloon was for eating and sat 14 at 7 tables. The other "drawing room" sat 9 in two armchairs and three settees and had a writing table with lamps and mirrors. Next to it was a conventional six-seat compartment.

Over the years various changes were made. The frosted glass hinged toplights in the saloon windows were soon replaced by sliding ventilators. In 1947 as part of a general renovation for peacetime use the small compartment was removed and the space added to the drawing room saloon. B.R. kept the two saloons for V.I.P. use and painted them chocolate and cream. In 1960-61 No. 9005 underwent a major rebuilding for use as the W.R. General Manager's saloon. The work was done at Wolverton where the coach was one of the first to be fitted with the new B4 bogie. What has only recently come to light is that it also underwent a change of chassis. The old one being defective was replaced by that



*Top right No. 9004 at the Kyle of Lochalsh, July 1972 (Richard Treloar). Above the kitchen of No. 9005.*

*Right—The drawing room of No. 9005 after refurbishing in 1947 (British Railways)*





from 1930 Cornish Riviera brake third No. 5301. It seems likely that it was at that time that the final alterations to the exterior were made. When the small compartment was removed in 1947 both its door and the one into the adjoining saloon were retained and a large single light window put between them. Now the saloon door was removed and the single light window replaced by a large sliding-ventilator type matching the existing ones to give the present distinctive three closely-spaced windows at that end. The remaining top lights in the central portion of the coach were also replaced by sliding ventilators. These changes were not made to 9004 which appears to remain in 1947 condition. The accommodation in 9005 from 1961 was 14 at 5 tables in the dining saloon and in the

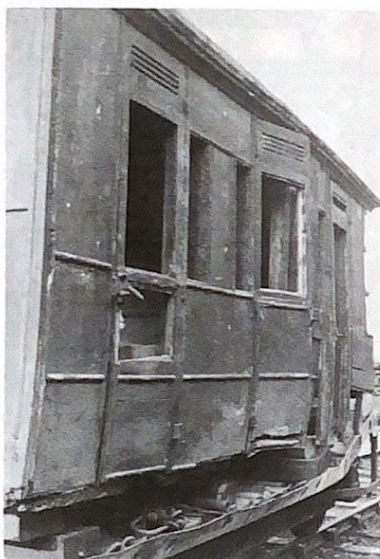
drawing room 8 bucket seats round a table and a three-seat settee.

No. 9005 was at some stage fitted with air braking and was withdrawn without further modification in 1974, by then in the blue and grey livery, remnants of which it still wears. Stripped of interior fittings it was purchased by the Society and a group of members and came to Didcot on some BR 1951 type bogies, which made it out-of-gauge. When the "Whitewash Coach's" 7' GW bogies became available two or three years ago the chance was seized to have them put under 9005 which was sent to Swindon for the purpose. It languished there for two years when it was realised that the chassis fitted in 1961 was unsuitable for the heavy duty 7' bogies from the Whitewash Coach. Fortunately some suitable 9' bogies were traced and fitted under the vehicle, which

returned to Didcot in March 1983 with bogies and brake gear restored to main-line running standards. Much remains to be done to restore the bodywork and interior but it is hoped that this may be achieved soon because the vehicle is needed for on-site catering while the Ocean Saloons are overhauled.

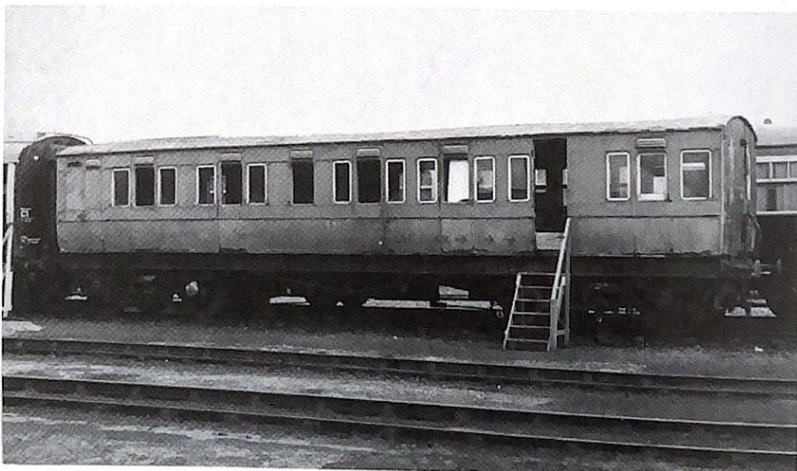
Meanwhile No. 9004 went to the North Eastern Region as the Civil Engineer's Saloon in 1962-3. It was withdrawn in 1972 and purchased by Mr. Bill McAlpine. Based at Carnforth it has recently seen summer service as an observation car on the Kyle of Lochalsh line carrying chocolate and cream to parts which other Great Western coaches cannot reach.

It is much to be hoped that the time will come when 9005 will also be able to show our colours on the main line once again.

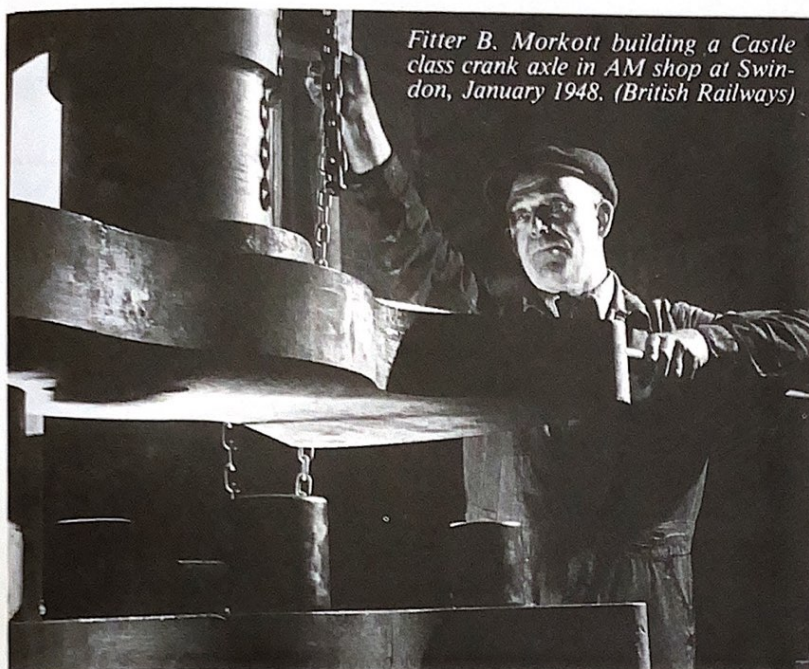


*Top and above right part of a Broad Gauge carriage which arrived recently at Didcot and which will eventually be incorporated into a rebuilt vehicle.*

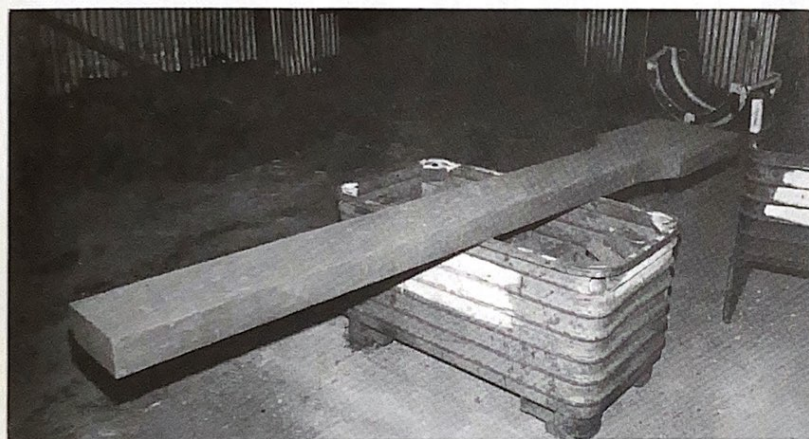
*Right No. 238, the Cambrian Railway tri-composite brake, renumbered 6277 by the Great Western and taken into departmental stock as DW 80945 which came to Didcot from Oswestry in 1970 and is shortly to go to the National Railway Museum at York. (P. Q. Treloar)*



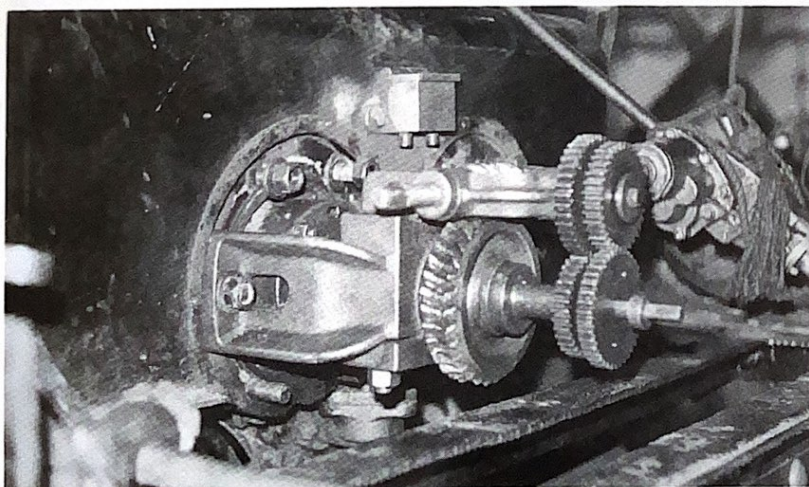




*Fitter B. Morkott building a Castle class crank axle in AM shop at Swindon, January 1948. (British Railways)*



*Inside connecting rod forging for No. 5029 Nunney Castle at BSC Craignuk Works, Motherwell, December 1982.*



*Boring No. 5051's right-hand inside valve bore. (P. Chatman)*

## Auto Train Memories

by  
**H.C. Taylor**

Reading the book on 'Auto Trains and Steam Rail Motors of the Great Western', brings to my mind some memories of working on some of these trains. I started engine cleaning at Southall in February 1920 and was promoted fireman in 1924. I worked through the links at Southall including the car link as the auto train link was known as, besides doing some work on Steam Rail Motors when 'Spare', and was made a driver for Didcot in 1942. The only steam car left at Southall was stabled in the car shed which was situated opposite the engine shed across the Brentford Branch. To "coal the car" as it was termed, the engine room end was brought opposite the coal truck and coal was thrown from the truck on to the floor of the engine room and then thrown into the bunker.

The fire hole was at floor level if not partly below it and the floor boards immediately in front of the firehole were sliced away to give a better access. The firehole door was in two halves each of which slid across to meet in the middle and shut the firehole. The two halves were not connected, and each half had a nob on it which enabled the fireman to manipulate the half door with the shovel.

As the water tank was below floor level, the injectors were of the lifting type and care was needed in using them, there was no waste water pipe, so it was not a question of opening the water valve, giving it steam and adjusting the water valve until the injector was working properly.

Another thing about these steam cars was that the regulator was inclined to blow through, something hardly ever experienced on a Western engine, not before nationalisation at any rate.

There were 16 turns in the car link when I was in it. Booking on times ranged from 2.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. Plenty of flexibility there, as in all links.

An extra 15 minutes was allowed in preparation time on some of the

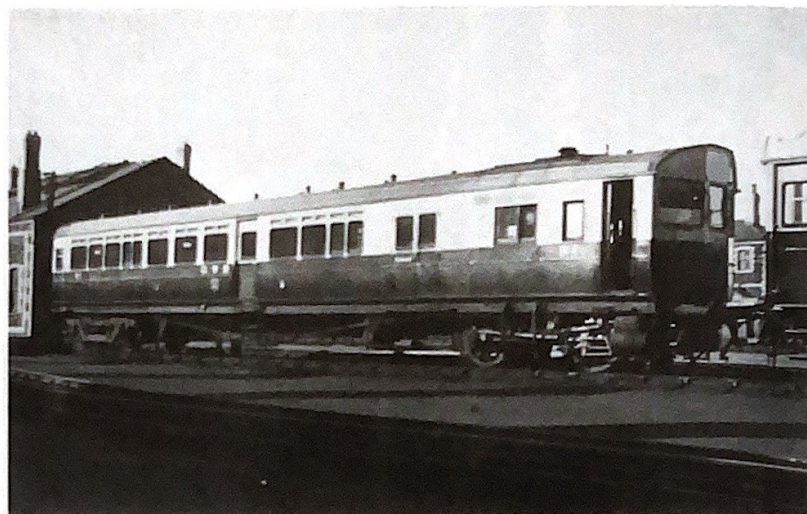


early turns to top up the coal bunker and it was no good doing this unless the firebox was almost filled. Then over to the trailer siding to pick up. It was the fireman's job to do the connecting between the engine and the trailer. The connections included the engine coupling to the trailer hook, the electric bell connection, the vacuum pipes, the steam heating pipes, and the regulator slide after manipulating it to get it to fit its connection, lastly the whistle chain or wire. If a trailer had to be attached at the front of the engine as well, all this had to be done again. If a third or fourth trailer was needed the connections between the trailers had to be made good including the regulator connections.

Like most footplate work a good fireman made all the difference. If the fireman could not boil water all the improvements and progress in locomotive design went for nought. All those wonderful runs depended on the fireman's shovel.

However, if the engine was between two trailers all day the driver never got on the engine apart from seeing that things were all right when changing ends at terminal points.

The fireman had to fire the engine, ensure the boiler water level was satisfactory, see that the cylinder lubricator was working properly, create the vacuum, notch the reversing lever, or screw, up into the proper notch and see to the



A.T.C. if necessary. Also he might have to help with the opening or closing of the regulator, if all those bell crank connections, and rods and pins had developed much play. What then if the driver was two trailer lengths away? Not much, if any, adjusting of the regulator opening on the engine was possible from the driving end of the trailer (or two trailers) where he could not tell if the engine was slipping or priming.

Also the fireman had to keep an eye on the braking, and be prepared to act on the bell signal from the driver if stopping short or over running was to be avoided.

Looking back it seems surprising that no fireman was examined—or

instructed—as to his capabilities in all this. Surely it should have been passed firemen who did such work? No footplateman was placed in charge of an engine unless he had passed the examining Inspector on knowledge of the engine and rules. The driver, I suppose, was in charge even if he was at the other end of the trailer or perhaps two trailers. On most of our car turns at Southall it was in the morning and evening rush hour that more than one trailer was used so the driver was on the engine a good part of the day, but in other parts of the system trailers each end of the engine was the order of the day.



*Fifty years ago the GWR was the first railway company to introduce an air service. Four Dragon Rapides in 1936 (British Railways).*



## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

**CRANMORE:** On your next visit to the East Somerset Railway stay only two miles from the station at Willow Langley Farm, a sixteenth century farmhouse offering a warm welcome, comfortable accommodation, good food, guests' own lounge with log fire. Tel: Cranmore (074988) 551

### WANTED

**COLOUR SLIDES** of Cornish brocoli and West Wales milk trains required by geography master, copy or purchase—McCarthy, 34 Gwerthonor Road, Gilfach, Barcoed, Mid Glam.

GWS member John Aronson is wondering whether a slip carriage still exists anywhere in any form. If so he would very much like to hear of its whereabouts. Any information to the Echo please.

The second part of Shed Code Reflections, together with comments and additional information sent in by readers is held over through pressure on space to a future edition. We would still like to get in contact with the author.

## THE GREAT WESTERN SOCIETY

The Great Western Society exists to encourage interest in all aspects of the Great Western Railway. The Society comprises two companies; Great Western Society Limited which is administered by the Council, and Great Western Preservations Limited which is a holding company for the preserved locomotives and rolling stock. Membership and Council correspondence should be addressed to: Great Western Society, Didcot, Oxfordshire.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Ordinary £5.50\*      Student/Senior Citizen £3.50\*      Family £8.00\*

\*New Members joining after July 1st pay:

Ordinary £3.00      Student/Senior Citizen £2.00      Family £4.00

All Annual Subscriptions are renewable on January 1st.

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP £125.00**

Enrolment fee to new members £1.00

Membership subscriptions include V.A.T.

### GROUP SECRETARIES

Bristol: **ROBIN T. JORDAN**,  
21 High Street, Wick, Nr. Bristol BS15 5QJ.

East Midlands: **DAVID LONGMAN**,  
22 Grasmere Close, Kempston, Bedford.

London: **TONY BAYLISS**  
25 Chalfont Way, Ealing, W13.

North West: **PETER ECKERSLEY**  
26, Cherry Tree Way, Bradshaw, Bolton, Lancashire.

Oxford: **FRED SNOW**,  
120, Rutten Lane, Yarnton, Oxford.

Reading: **PETER MORLEY**  
15 Haywood Way, Reading, Berks RG3 2HE.

South Wales: **JOHN KENWARD**,  
"Newburn", 14 Heol-Y-Nant, Llannon, Llanelli, Dyfed SA14 6AE.

South West: **CEDRIC OWEN**  
'Modane', 9, Carswells Road, Kingskerswell, Devon TQ12 5BL.

Swindon: **JILL SOUTHEY**  
30, Charminster Close, Nythe, Swindon, Wiltshire.

Taunton: **DAVID HARTLAND**,  
11, Manor Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 5BB.

Wessex: **JOHN PALK**,  
50 Fairview Drive, Romsey, Hants.

### ANTIQUARY

Purchasing Officer: **DICK WERRELL**,  
5 Regent Gardens, Didcot, Oxon.

### PRESERVATION DEPOTS

**DIDCOT:** Opening details from GWS, Didcot, Oxfordshire.

**TAUNTON:** Visits by arrangement with the Taunton Group Secretary.

### GREAT WESTERN ECHO

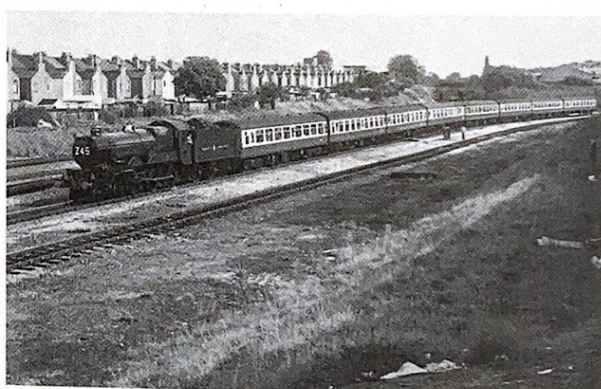
Editor and advertising: **MICHAEL H. C. BAKER**

Views expressed by contributors to this journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Great Western Society.

#### Classified Ads:-

6p per word; concessionary price for Great Western Society members 4p per word.





*No. 5051 Drysllwyn Castle on the main line—Top At Hereford, 16th April 1983 after bringing in the Welsh Marches Pullman from Newport (MHCB). Middle—At Llanvihangel on the same day (Mark Wilkins). Bottom left—beside No. 5080 Defiant at Tyseley 9th October 1982; Bottom right—approaching Tyseley from Stratford on Avon on the same day (Rev. David Hardy).*